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DE RUEHDBU #1136 2201012
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FM AMEMBASSY DUSHANBE
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 0750
INFO RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL 2217
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 1969
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 2184
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 2222
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 1492
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 2018
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS 1247
RUEHDBU/AMEMBASSY DUSHANBE 2577

UNCLAS DUSHANBE 001136

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

STATE FOR SCA/CEN, DRL

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [KIRF](#) [TI](#)

SUBJECT: TAJIK IMAMS DEFY LOCAL AUTHORITIES

REF: DUSHANBE 1111

¶1. (U) Following a campaign to shutter - and in some cases bulldoze - unregistered mosques in Dushanbe last month, indications that the scope for freedom of religion in Tajikistan is dwindling continue to surface. However, some members of the country's religious leadership are resisting government efforts to place restrictions on their followers' freedom of worship. Although the government has backed down in at least one recent confrontation, it is uncertain how long dissent will be tolerated.

¶2. (SBU) According to a local Embassy staff member, the Istaravshan district prosecutor approached Domullo Hamzakhon, Imam of the city's Guli Surkh mosque, demanding that children under the age of 16 not be allowed to worship there. The prosecutor claimed that his authority stemmed from newly enacted legislation, but when Hamzakhon requested to see the text of this law the prosecutor refused. This prompted Hamzakhon to assert that if the prosecutor wished to enforce his order he would have to come to the mosque himself and explain his actions to the congregation. The prosecutor backed down in the face of this challenge, and children continue to pray openly at Hamzakhon's mosque.

¶3. (U) Current Tajik law stipulates that children under the age of 16 need parental consent in order to worship at mosque. In the past, local militia have driven vans to mosques in order to round up children who they claim are truants and should be in schools rather than in mosques. In some incidents, local community members, in a show of defiance, have stopped militia from removing children.

¶4. (SBU) In another incident, the State Committee on National Security summoned Domullo Sirojiddin, Imam of an unregistered mosque in the Zarafshon area of Dushanbe, to its offices on August 6. This action came after Sirojiddin received fines on two occasions for continuing to lead prayers out in the open air, next to his old mosque which authorities closed on July 26 along with several other unregistered mosques (REFTEL). His first fine amounted to \$35, while the second was nearly \$300. In addition to leading an unregistered mosque, it is likely that security officials singled out Sirojiddin out for particular attention because he is one of the few remaining religious leaders to openly express radical, anti-government (and sometimes anti-U.S.) opinions during his sermons.

15. (SBU) COMMENT: The Istaravshan district prosecutor's insistence that his order comes from new legislation is particularly foreboding, given constant rumors that parliament will soon pass a restrictive draft law on religion. Parliament is currently on recess and, according to parliamentarians, the draft law has not yet been introduced. However, the prosecutor's actions show that some government officials are already certain that the draft will be signed into law and have taken steps to implement it. The above examples of protest indicate that some Tajiks are not going to quietly obey new regulations restricting religious freedom, particularly with regard to Islam. END COMMENT.

JACOBSON